

I was the Anne G. Osborn ASNR International Outreach Professor for Colombia visiting Barranquilla and Cartagena for 1 week in May 2024. My trip included structured visits to residency programs in these 2 cities and attendance at the 47th Annual Congress of Colombian Radiology as part of the faculty for the Neuroradiology Symposium. I was very honored to be selected to represent ASNR and had a really great visit and learning experience.

My first stop was to Universidad Metropolitana in Barranquilla, Colombia hosted by Ana Luz Tapia. Ana picked me up at the airport and drove me to the hotel – driving in Colombia is not for the weak-hearted! The next morning, I attended a conference for the radiology residents organized for my visit and also attended by local faculty interested in neuroradiology. I gave two lectures on epilepsy imaging and CT of dementia, then participated in resident case presentations and a tour of the local radiology facilities. The residents were all very interested in my presentations and had questions about the material, training and how radiology is organized in the United States. During my tour we continued an extensive discussion of infectious causes of epilepsy, which of course are much more common in Colombia than New York City – they showed me an MRI from the previous week that contained all the different stages of neurocysticercosis in a single image! This is endemic in rural Colombia whereas at NYU we seldom see a case a month for this diagnosis, usually just old focal calcifications in patients that have immigrated to the USA. After the conference we went to an excellent lunch with the residents, then a brief Barranquilla site-seeing tour with Ana that concluded with chocolate malts at her local favorite shop (not what I was expecting near the equator!). I then took a pre-arranged 2-hour taxi drive to Cartagena where we passed through small roadside villages that did not appear to even have running water (hence the neurocysticercosis).



The next morning I visited the Universidad de Cartagena hosted by Micaela Arrieta Usta. Like Ana, Micaela was a gracious host and I got a free tour of parts of Cartagena off the tourist route in our drive to the medical center – again driving here is quite an adventure and makes New York traffic look tame (think organized chaos). Here also there was a conference for radiology residents and

other students where I repeated my lectures on epilepsy imaging and CT of dementia, then interacted in resident case presentations. Like Barranquilla, the residents made excellent presentations and asked me interesting questions related to my talks. My Spanish is nonexistent so I was impressed by the quality of the talks by the residents particularly since they were speaking in English just for my benefit. I showed them lots of pretty images but I think they were most impressed with how much coffee I could drink. This public residency program was smaller than Universidad Metropolitana in Barranquilla, but associated with a local medical school and I toured some of the teaching facilities with Micaela after our conference.



The next day I then attended the 47th Annual Congress of Colombian Radiology at the convention center in Cartagena. This large, well-organized meeting is one of the biggest radiology meetings in the south and central America. There were 500+ people in attendance and the vendor area was very active with 2 full floors. Like RSNA this meeting is “big” and can be a bit overwhelming to new attendees. Fortunately, I was hosted by Alejandro Baena, but also helped out by Carolina Tramontini, Micaela Arrieta Usta and many others – e.g. Feliza Restrepo helped me on the first day when I looked lost and needed an immediate coffee infusion before my first talk! Many of the lectures were in English even by native Spanish speakers, but there also was translation available in either language. I gave 4 lectures on advanced neuroanatomy, dementia imaging, multiple sclerosis differential diagnosis and movement disorders. Despite my near complete lack of Spanish, the talks were well attended and well-received with lots of questions afterwards. It was easy to follow along other speakers in Spanish-only lectures not because I spoke more than 10 words of Spanish, but because the lectures were images on subjects I was familiar with! Throughout the symposium I was greatly impressed with the quality of the lectures – being a bit disconnected by language I had a “meta” perspective and learned from the other speakers new tricks for public speaking and improvements to slide organization/presentation. I also enjoyed talking to the translators and learning how to be a better English speaker in the future – talk a bit slower than you think and use less acronyms since Spanish requires ~30% more words than English in translation! Dementia and movement disorders are unfortunately very heavy on the dreaded acronyms.

In the vendor area and during the breaks, I got to reunite with residents from both radiology residency programs I had just visited. During the meeting I also had lots of opportunities to talk with Neuroradiologists and other radiology residents from different cities in Colombia. I met and did some group activities with several other English-speaking visiting faculty in neuroradiology and other subspecialties including from AFIP (USA), Belgium, United Kingdom and Abu Dhabi. Along with our hosts, on evening events we shared our experiences and thinking about how deliver useful information during these visits. Throughout the meeting I was making many new professional connections and learning a lot. At the meeting I was really honored by my hosts hospitality and graciousness. Everyone went out of their way to make sure I was having an easy time and enjoyed my visit.

Many of the speakers stayed in the same hotel and there was an organizer in the lobby (George) that was forever helpful arranging for rides and site-seeing tours, and making sure I stayed on schedule. I never really felt left on my own – through WhatsApp and in person, the organizers were always gracious and willing to help me if I had questions or was unsure what to do or where I was supposed to go next. I had been a little anxious about visiting Colombia because of recent stories in the US news, but I always felt safe in the hotel, at the meeting, traveling and on the tours. I was able to see the main sites in the city during one morning with some of the other speakers and their spouses – my wife was disappointed I didn't buy her any Colombian emeralds, which are the best in the world.... On the last day, George also helped me with a private, customized tour with a guide I liked for the Bazurto market (where Anthony Bourdain went), the Manga neighbourhood and Castillo de San Felipe outside the walled city.

Overall I really had an excellent visit, and hope that the residents and conference attendees enjoyed my lectures and learned something from them. I benefited from the great hospitality of my Colombian hosts at each of the 3 locations I visited and presented. At the two residency programs I was impressed with the dedication and commitment to learning of the trainees and their faculty in a more challenging situation than I am familiar. These two hard-working Colombian residency programs I visited lacked many of the resources, breadth of cases and large neuroradiology faculty group we take for granted at NYU. NYU has 20+ neuroradiology faculty that read nothing but brain and spine, and many faculty like myself are hyperfocused subspecialist in select areas like dementia, fMRI or brain tumors. In comparison, these programs have more generalist radiologists that have to cover all clinical and teaching aspects of radiology (albeit there may be areas that individuals favor). Resources all round are more constrained compared to USA programs. While I am focused on translational research and advanced imaging at my home institution, I am still thinking about ways to help expand access to educational material for trainees at these two sites and similar programs in Colombia and elsewhere. I have been exploring creating YouTube lectures based on my US-based lectures and finding a way to translate the slides into Spanish. I have been trying to find time to improve my Spanish in case I go back! I do think online material and exposure to a themed case conferences guided by subspecialist (e.g. me geeking out on dementia) can be helpful. Overall I think the Anne G. Osborn ASNR International Outreach Professor program is an excellent idea for increasing exchange of information and ideas about neuroradiology education and clinical care. I am very thankful and honored to have been a part of the program and hope that I have contributed to its greater mission.